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New Orleans Secular Humanist Association

About Us

The New Orleans Secular Humanist Association is dedicated to raising the awareness of people of the Gulf Coast region to the ideals and values of secular humanism. We are an affiliate of the Council for Secular Humanism, a member of the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies, Associate of the American Humanist Association, an affiliate of American Atheists, and member of the Atheist Alliance International.

Statement of Principles

We reject efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation. We believe in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest. We believe in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics are amenable to critical, rational guidance. Normative standards exist that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences. We affirm humanism as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others. We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.



Announcements

NOSHA plans to raise funds for new projects. Read about NOSHA projects that you can support.

NOSHA now has an online discussion list. You can read what participants have been discussing by clicking [here](#).

Anyone interested in finding more about us and secular humanism can attend our regular meetings. See [Calendar](#) or [News](#) for a schedule of meeting dates and events.

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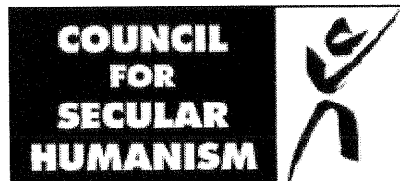
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Mission Statement of the



The Council for Secular Humanism cultivates rational inquiry, ethical values, and human development through the advancement of secular humanism. To carry out its mission the **Council for Secular Humanism** sponsors publications, programs, and organizes meetings and other group activities. The Council's specific objectives are:

To promote secular humanist principles to the public, media, and policy-makers

To provide secular humanist activities and communities to serve the needs of nonreligious people and foster human enrichment

To demonstrate the viability of the secular humanist eupraxophy as an alternative naturalistic life-stance

To engage in research relating to the critical examination of religious and supernatural claims and the humanist outlook

To conduct educational programs for "all age" levels



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What Is Secular Humanism?

Secular Humanism is a term which has come into use in the last thirty years to describe a world view with the following elements and principles:

- * • A conviction that dogmas, ideologies and traditions, whether religious, political or social, must be weighed and tested by each individual and not simply accepted on faith.
- * • Commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence, and scientific methods of inquiry, rather than faith and mysticism, in seeking solutions to human problems and answers to important human questions.
- A primary concern with fulfillment, growth, and creativity for both the individual and humankind in general.
- * • A constant search for objective truth, with the understanding that new knowledge and experience constantly alter our imperfect perception of it.
- A concern for this life and a commitment to making it meaningful through better understanding of ourselves, our history, our intellectual and artistic achievements, and the outlooks of those who differ from us.
- A search for viable individual, social and political principles of ethical conduct, judging them on their ability to enhance human well-being and individual responsibility.

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- A conviction that with reason, an open marketplace of ideas, good will, and tolerance, progress can be made in building a better world for ourselves and our children.

How Do Secular Humanists View Religious and Supernatural Claims?

Secular humanists accept a world view or philosophy called naturalism, in which the physical laws of the universe are not superseded by non-material or supernatural entities such as demons, gods, or other "spiritual" beings outside the realm of the natural universe. Supernatural events such as miracles (in which physical laws are defied) and psi phenomena, such as ESP, telekinesis, etc., are not dismissed out of hand, but are viewed with a high degree of skepticism.

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Are Secular Humanists Atheists?

Secular humanists typically describe themselves as atheist (without a belief in a god and very skeptical of the possibility) or agnostic (without a belief in a god and uncertain as to the possibility). Secular humanists hail from widely divergent philosophical and religious backgrounds, ranging from Christian fundamentalism to liberal belief systems to lifelong atheism. Some have achieved a comfortable secular humanist stance after a period of deism. Deists are those who express a vague or mystical feeling that a creative intelligence may be, or was at one time, connected to the universe or involved with its creation, but is now either nonexistent or no longer concerned with its operation.

Secular humanists do not rely upon gods or other supernatural forces to solve their problems or provide guidance for their conduct. They rely instead upon the application of reason, the lessons of history, and personal

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experience to form an ethical/moral foundation and to create meaning in life. Secular humanists look to the methodology of science as the most reliable source of information about what is factual or true about the universe we all share, acknowledging that new discoveries will always alter and expand our understanding of it and perhaps change our approach to ethical issues as well.

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What Is The Origin of Secular Humanism?

Secular humanism as an organized philosophical system is relatively new, but its foundations can be found in the ideas of classical Greek philosophers such as the Stoics and Epicureans as well as in Chinese Confucianism. These philosophical views looked to human beings rather than gods to solve human problems.

During the Dark Ages of Western Europe, humanist philosophies were suppressed by the political power of the church. Those who dared to express views in opposition to the prevailing religious dogmas were banished, tortured or executed. Not until the Renaissance of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, with the flourishing of art, music, literature, philosophy and exploration, would consideration of the humanist alternative to a god-centered existence be permitted. During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, with the development of science, philosophers finally began to openly criticize the authority of the church and engage in what became known as "free thought."

The nineteenth century Freethought movement of America and Western Europe finally made it possible for the common citizen to reject blind faith and superstition without the risk of persecution. The influence of science and technology, together with the challenges to religious orthodoxy by such

celebrity freethinkers as Mark Twain and Robert G. Ingersoll brought elements of humanist philosophy even to mainline Christian churches, which became more concerned with this world, less with the next.

In the twentieth century scientists, philosophers, and progressive theologians began to organize in an effort to promote the humanist alternative to traditional faith-based world views. These early organizers classified humanism as a non-theistic religion which would fulfill the human need for an ordered ethical/philosophical system to guide one's life, a "spirituality" without the supernatural. In the last thirty years, those who reject supernaturalism as a viable philosophical outlook have adopted the term "secular humanism" to describe their non-religious life stance.

Critics often try to classify secular humanism as a religion. Yet secular humanism lacks essential characteristics of a religion, including belief in a deity and an accompanying transcendent order. Secular humanists contend that issues concerning ethics, appropriate social and legal conduct, and the methodologies of science are philosophical and are not part of the domain of religion, which deals with the supernatural, mystical and transcendent.

Secular humanism, then, is a philosophy and world view which centers upon human concerns and employs rational and scientific methods to address the wide range of issues important to us all. While secular humanism is at odds with faith-based religious systems on many issues, it is dedicated to the fulfillment of the individual and humankind in general. To accomplish this end, secular humanism encourages a commitment to a set of principles which promote the development of tolerance and compassion and an understanding of the methods of science, critical analysis, and philosophical reflection.

For a detailed discussion of secular humanism, refer to the following books written by philosopher and Council of Secular Humanism founder Paul Kurtz and published by Prometheus Books:

- *The Transcendental Temptation*
- *Forbidden Fruit: The Ethics of Humanism*
- *Living Without Religion: Eupraxophy*
- *In Defense of Secular Humanism*

"What is Secular Humanism" was written by Fritz Stevens, Edward Tabash, Tom Hill, Mary Ellen Sikes, and Tom Flynn.



Affirmations of Humanism



A Secular Humanist Declaration



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